



STATE OF TENNESSEE  
DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH  
MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

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## ANNOUNCEMENT OF REVISIONS TO CERTIFICATE OF NEED

To promote the use of more humane transportation options for individuals receiving mental health and/or substance abuse services, the Tennessee Department of Mental Health (TDMH) made revisions to the Certificate of Need (CON) which will allow individuals who are examined for emergency involuntary inpatient psychiatric hospitalization access to appropriate, alternative transportation to admitting psychiatric facilities.

As outlined by Tennessee Code Annotated (T.C.A.) §33-6-901, sheriffs, secondary transport agents, or others may transport patients to an admitting facility for examination. In particular, T.C.A. §33-6-901(a)(1)(d) authorizes transportation by: **One or more friends, neighbors, other mental health professionals familiar with the person, relatives of the person, or a member of the clergy.** Revisions to the CON were made to allow Mandatory Pre-screening Agents (MPAs) to identify individuals who may be transported by others, reducing reliance on law enforcement involvement in the care of individuals in need of services for their illness.

Additionally, after an individual has been examined for a CON under Title 33, Chapter 6, Part 4 of the T.C.A., local sheriffs transport the individual to an admitting psychiatric facility for a second CON examination. This process creates stress and strain for individuals in need of psychiatric inpatient services and places a significant demand on the time and resources of the systems involved in the individual's care such as emergency departments, crisis response staff and law enforcement.

In an effort to streamline this process, TDMH has begun implementing the use of telehealth technology in selected locations across the state. Telehealth locations employ remote video-conferencing to allow physicians at a proposed admitting psychiatric facility to examine an individual for a second CON at a local site prior to the sheriff transporting to the admitting facility. If a physician conducting a telehealth evaluation determines that the individual does **not** meet the criteria for a second CON, he or she may be released and the transporting law enforcement agency will not be required for ongoing transportation (which would have been necessary prior to telehealth system implementation).

Telehealth systems will expedite the hospitalization process and eliminate the potential for a non-admit after being transported to the admitting facility. This will be particularly beneficial in situations where the admitting psychiatric facility is some distance away from the first screening location. Revisions to our current CON form have been made which will allow MPAs to identify patients who may be examined at a telehealth facility when appropriate.

The revised CON is now available on the TDMH website at <http://tn.gov/mental/t33/MHDD5033R4.pdf>. **Please begin using the new form immediately.** For questions, please contact Melissa Sparks, TDMH Director of Crisis Services at 615-253-4641.